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defence of the barricade. When these ceaseless alarms shall have produced exhaustion and weariness, the nation will gladly seek a refuge from them under the power of a military dictator.

“ Custode rerum Cæsare, non furor
Civilis aut vis exiget otium,
Non ira, quæ procudit enses,
Et miseras inimicat urbes.”

ART. VIII. — *Journal of the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction*, edited by HENRY BARNARD, Commissioner of Public Schools. Vols. I. and II. Providence : B. Cranston & Co. 1846-7.

THE State of Rhode Island has from the first been a peculiar community. The *nationality* of its people, if we may use a word that is likely to be common, has been decided and intense. While as yet its population numbered but a few hundreds, dwelling in two or three rude villages, their national spirit was altogether diverse from that of the three neighbouring Colonies. Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Connecticut differed from each other in some slight particulars ; but they were fundamentally opposed to Rhode Island, and Rhode Island was as fundamentally opposed to them. The three Colonies were founded and administered on the principle, that, as the end of man's existence is religion, therefore religion should be the end of all human institutions ; that civil government should be administered for the church, and the object for which the state should legislate most directly and most carefully should be the religious interests of the community, as comprised in their creed and conduct.

The people of Rhode Island held as fervently as their neighbours that religion was the end of human existence and of human institutions. They denied, however, that this end would be promoted by the aid or interference of the state. They contended that the state would do the highest service to religion by letting it alone, and that the only duty which it owed to the church was to secure to every man the amplest toleration in respect to his faith and worship. The original

compact of the settlers of Providence was as follows :—
“ We, whose names are hereunder, desirous to inhabit the town of Providence, do promise to subject ourselves, in active and passive obedience, to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for public good of the body, in an orderly way, by the major assent of the present inhabitants, masters of families, incorporated together into a town-fellowship, and such as they shall admit unto them, *only in civil things.*”

The phrase “ only in civil things ” expresses the principle that was peculiar to Rhode Island. The limitation which this phrase imposed on the civil power marked the beginning of a new era in the history of man. It was the first ray of the sun which is not yet fully risen upon the earth. The great principle of religious freedom, which was asserted in these words, by a handful of outcasts, themselves refugees from a community of outcasts, and asserted under obloquy and contempt, is at this moment helping to convulse the mightiest empires of Europe. Let all honor be given to Rhode Island for being founded by men who first asserted this principle. As a state she deserves our grateful homage, for being the first to incorporate it into her constitution, and for boldly adhering to it as her glory and pride.

But she made one mistake. In interpreting the phrase “ only in civil things,” the common school was rejected, as being not a civil but a religious concern, and as thereby excluded from the care and patronage of the government. For more than a century and a half, this mistake was adhered to, so that during this period there is no trace of any legislation whatever for this important interest. Nearly two centuries were required for the state to discover that the word “ civil ” is not equivalent to *material* or *physical*, and that a provision for that culture which is required to render a man fit to be a citizen at all is far different from the imposition of a dogma of religious faith, or a ritual of divine worship.

This opinion of Rhode Island, though mistaken, was not unnatural. The common schools of Massachusetts and Connecticut were a nursery for the Puritan church. The institution was sustained by the same government which provided for the support of a particular ministry. It was controlled by that ministry, and made by them to teach the same principles which they expounded from the pulpit. It was viewed by its ardent friends as a part of the church, and because it was

a part of the church, they thought it needed the fostering care of the state. When, therefore, the church was cut off from the government by this daring little republic, the common school was separated also. To compel a citizen to support a school would have been to violate the rights of conscience. To compel him to educate his children would have been an invasion of his rights as a free-born Rhode-Islander, which would not be endured.

The views of the leading religious sects that originally settled Rhode Island, in respect to learning and schools of learning generally, were suited to confirm them in this mistaken interpretation of their principle of religious liberty. The early Baptists differed from the Congregationalists in their estimation of learning, and though by and by they discovered and renounced their error, yet the minor sects of their communion were most inveterate in their adherence to it. The Quakers, in their preference of the spirit to the letter of the Scriptures, very naturally lost sight of the value of "letters" generally. Their high and mysterious notions of the value of the inward light led them to deprecate the light that was kindled and nourished at the schools of profane knowledge; while the bigoted jealousy, in both these sects, of an established and hireling priesthood extended itself to whatever was deemed essential to their corrupted systems of intellectual and moral oppression. The Jews also, who came in considerable numbers to this sole ark of refuge and quiet that the world then provided for them, were, for obvious reasons, not likely to exert an influence in the opposite direction.

The early history of this State, thus constituted and thus peopled, was not fitted to lead its citizens to look with a more kindly eye on the public-school system. It held, from the first, not merely an antagonistic position towards the neighbouring Colonies, but it was constantly put upon its defence against their aggressions. These aggressions had not merely for their object the annexation of certain border towns or provinces, but boldly contemplated the absorption of the entire territory. "Little Rhody" was not too large to be disposed of at a single mouthful, especially as there were three Colonies eager to share in the partition. Connecticut was ready to march up to the western coast of the Narragansett Bay; Massachusetts claimed all the land on the eastern border; and Plym-

outh, that no resting-place might be left to these pestilent disturbers of the peace, was ready to assert her title to the island that lay like a gem in the midst of the beautiful Narragansett. So this infant state was liable at any moment to be put out to sea in an open boat, and to be unceremoniously pushed off into the broad Atlantic. The feelings awakened by this antagonistic position were not likely to conciliate her towards what was peculiar in the institutions of her oppressors. Besides, Rhode Island differed somewhat in her internal economy from her neighbours ; she was not so much a colony, as a confederation of towns ; and her intense spirit of individuality led her to guard against any infringement upon the rights of her smaller organizations.

The result of this combination of causes was what might have been predicted. The public or free school, which was the glory of Massachusetts and Connecticut, was unknown in Rhode Island. As a consequence, education, even of the humblest sort, was to some extent unknown. As a public interest or duty, it was entirely neglected. It was of course despised, and with energy and intensesness, inasmuch as ignorance was regarded as the badge of intellectual and spiritual freedom, and learning as the sign of a pharisaical and slavish bondage.

The border towns upon the line between Connecticut and Rhode Island abound in traditions and stories, which illustrate the peculiar views taken by the Rhode-Islanders of the institutions of their neighbours. Many of these stories are doubtless apocryphal, and others are highly colored. But for the truth of the following we are prepared to give the most credible testimony. About forty years since, a gentleman from Connecticut was travelling through Rhode Island, towards the town of Providence, when he met a very thriving citizen of the State, apparently a sturdy and wealthy farmer. The latter at once mistook his Connecticut friend for a clergyman, and stopped him upon the road to do battle against the two most obnoxious institutions of the sister republic, a parish ministry and common schools. In the progress of the tilt, he acknowledged himself the father of a large family of children, and able to provide for their education ; but gave the three following reasons why he felt no interest in sending them to school. The first was, that his oldest daughter could read well enough, and one child could do all the reading that was

necessary for the family. The second reason was, that if he sent his children to school, he should be obliged to provide them all with shoes and stockings, which were not necessary if they remained at home ; “and besides,” said he, as though the last reason were decisive, “it is a Connecticut custom, and I do not like it.” We do not suppose that all the inhabitants would have agreed with their fellow-citizen in all the reasons which he alleged for his aversion to a common-school system. It is no dishonor to them, however, to believe that they were ardently, if not bigotedly, attached to the principle of the largest individual liberty in regard to education, and that they preferred their own freedom, with its practical inconveniences, to the practical benefits which their neighbours enjoyed at the cost of a principle.

Rhode Island was not, however, given up to barbarism. The neglect of education was not universal. The tendencies to evil which were continually issuing from her mistaken views of an important truth did not result in all their appropriate consequences of evil. We say no more than the great majority of its citizens are now saying by their conduct, and what we presume they are as ready to acknowledge in words, when we assert that the State suffered severely in consequence of this neglect, that a large portion of its population in many important respects were inferior to their neighbours, and that in manners, in morals, and in enterprise, they gave striking testimony to the error of those who refused to provide for their higher wants. The reasons why these consequences were not still more prevalent and disastrous it is not difficult to discern. The territory on which this experiment was tried was very limited. None of its population were ignorant of the habits of the neighbouring States, of their zeal for the education of their children, and of the superior virtue and thrift which were the consequences of these habits. The more discerning saw these results, and sought to supply the defects of an organized system by private enterprise, to which, in some instances, they might have been stimulated by the desire to prove that individual freedom could accomplish more than society in bonds. Many of the inhabitants had emigrated from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and though they might rejoice in their escape from “the house of bondage,” they also recollected some of the substantial benefits which were there enjoyed. The inhabitants of Providence,

Bristol, Newport, and other seaports, indeed, the population of all the extended sea-coast on the borders and upon the islands of the beautiful Narragansett, were devoted to navigation and commerce. If these last were not educated at school, they were educated by a contact with their fellow-men, and in a roving and changeful life. They were thus preserved from the depressing and brutalizing influences which they would have contracted from an inland and rural life. A Rhode-Island sailor or trader could never show all the sad marks of the neglect of early culture which are seen and felt in the stolid vacancy of a Pennsylvania boor.

Besides, Rhode Island began early to have an aristocracy ; Providence and Newport, especially the latter, from its fine harbour and its attractive situation, had their merchant princes and their accomplished gentlemen. The Narragansett farmers owned large estates, which they cultivated by slaves, and in their persons, their manners, and hospitality presented no mean likeness to the polished gentry who at this day delight in the patriarchal institution. These gentlemen, whether of the city or plantation, were all genuine Rhode-Islanders ; not because they were bigoted in their admiration of Roger Williams's transcendental metaphysics, but because they liked the practical liberty which was allowed to every man to think and act as he pleased. In this, the Quaker, the Jew, and the Churchman were at one. The spirit of freedom which they cherished gave a buoyant freedom to their manners ; it imparted an originality and independence to their intellectual character, of which it still bears the impress. To this circumstance is it owing, that no State has furnished a larger proportion of men of peculiar and decided genius, than this State without common schools. Less than a century ago, Newport could boast of circles distinguished for scientific and literary culture ; the Redwood Library is a noble memorial of their zeal. The influence of this higher class upon the entire population could not be small ; the mere presence of men of a superior culture was in itself an education in some sense. At all events, there was secured to the State the services and the wisdom of enlightened men, who saved it from being ruined by the ignorance and passion of the uncultivated. The splendor of their genius, too, blinded the eye to the coarseness and squalor that were contracted by a portion of the body politic.

The history of legislation in respect to public schools both illustrates and confirms the views which we have expressed. Before 1798, there is no record of any movement upon this subject. Every man did what was right in his own eyes in respect to the education of his children, and, as was natural, very many did nothing. The first impulse towards a change originated from an association of mechanics and manufacturers in the city of Providence. In October, 1798, that body appointed a committee "to inquire into the most desirable method for the establishment of free schools." This committee reported in favor of an application to the General Assembly, "to provide for the establishment of free schools throughout the State." Accordingly, in February, 1799, the association presented an able memorial to the Assembly, and, as a consequence of this petition, an "Act to establish Free Schools" became a law of the State in 1800. In the preamble, one of the reasons given for the establishment of schools was, "to contribute *to the greater equality* of the people, by the common and joint instruction and education of the whole." This act provided for the distribution of 20 *per cent.* of the State tax of each year for schools, on condition that the several towns should maintain the number of schools prescribed to each, for the particular periods specified by the statute. The passage of this law was strenuously opposed, as being contrary to the principles and policy of the State, and after it was passed, Providence was the only town which carried it into effect. Measures were immediately taken to secure its repeal, and this was accomplished in 1803.

For eighteen years after this time, no record appears of any movement on the subject. In June, 1821, a committee was appointed to inquire into the state of education in the several towns, and to report in the October following; but their report was never called for. In 1827, plans were organized for a school law, which resulted in the passage of an act, in 1828, by an almost unanimous vote of both houses. This act is the basis of the present school system. It appropriated ten thousand dollars a year, from certain incomes, to be expended for education, and also made the beginning of a permanent school fund. In 1839, after "the deposit of the public money" with the several States, the school law was revised, and twenty-five thousand

dollars were appropriated annually for the purposes of education, including all the income from these deposits.

Six years ago, Rhode Island was shaken to its centre. Its existence as an organized society was threatened for months, and the horrors of dreaded anarchy impended over its cities and its households. Other communities heard of it at a distance, but they could not realize the solemn earnestness of the strife. The State was converted into a camp; every village and hamlet resounded with the din of military preparation. In many of these communities, two hostile bands were organized, in anticipation of actual conflict. In every tavern and workshop, angry discussions were continually going forward. Large collections of excited and ignorant men were addressed in the most exciting manner, and urged to be ready for deeds of blood, even against their friends and neighbours, to wrest from their hands rights that had been wrongfully withheld. The descendants of the old Rhode-Island stock were plied by artful appeals to their peculiar prejudices, and their ancient love for the largest liberty. The large masses of ignorant and uninstructed foreigners were easily imbued with the same spirit. On the other side, men of wealth trembled for their property, and for the safety of their dwellings and their persons. The old and the young, the venerable and the ardent, enlisted in the same companies, and solemnly took their position in the ranks together, to contend for law and order. The regular government triumphed, and the storm passed by. The influences of the crisis were most wholesome. It taught the entire population, that society does not stand of itself, that the foundations of civil government may be undermined and its strong pillars overthrown, that it is men who constitute a state, and that it is on the character of its population, as they are instructed or untaught, as they are thrifty or improvident, as they are virtuous or profligate, that the strength and security of a government must depend.

The cost of the conflict taught the most parsimonious, that it was cheaper in a pecuniary respect to prevent than to defray the expenses incident to an uninstructed populace. The public spirit, which in this strife had learned to regard that invisible thing called the state as an existence far more real and important than those interests which to the vulgar eye are esteemed the only substantial realities, was ready

to serve the state by still further sacrifices. The enthusiasm for the honor and good name of their favorite Rhode Island had learned to take a new direction. It was now earnest, and even eager, to abandon certain peculiarities in which it had been accustomed to glory. The generous spirit and enlarged views always characteristic of a commercial and manufacturing population were ready to fall in with any plan for the improvement of the entire commonwealth.

Under these circumstances, the attention of many of the influential citizens of the State was directed to the situation of the common schools, and the impression seems to have been general and deeply fixed, that no one interest was half so vital as this to the prosperity of the commonwealth, and perhaps even to the security of the new government. The "People's party" also were ready for the movement, and were most of them cordial in their friendship for it. In the consideration of the privileges of which they believed themselves to have been deprived, this had not escaped them; many of them saw and felt that deficiency in education tends to social inequality, and that the permanent neglect of the cultivation of any class of citizens tends to perpetuate political abuses, as well as social depression. Their leader had been active in his interest in the schools of Providence, and had given his influence to right views of school reform.

In October, 1843, Wilkins Updike introduced to the House of Representatives a bill "for ascertaining the condition of the public schools in this State, and for the improvement and better management thereof." In the remarks accompanying it, he said

"that the free-school system, as it then existed, was not a blessing to the State, except in the city of Providence, and possibly in a few other towns. This was not owing to the want of liberal appropriation from the general treasury. But the difficulty lay with the towns, and with the want of any thorough system for the examination of teachers, the regulation of books, and supervision of schools by officers qualified to discharge their duties. These things should be looked into. The legislature should know what becomes of the sum drawn annually from the general treasury. The people should have their attention called to the actual state of education among us. Our self-respect should be roused by a knowledge of the fact, that Rhode Island is behind the other New England States in this matter. With

a population of 108,830, we have over 1600 adults who cannot read or write, while Connecticut, with a population of 309,978, has only 526. The other New England States not only educate their own teachers, lawyers, doctors, and clergymen, but help to supply our demand for these classes of men. It is time to bestir ourselves in this matter. We need not act with precipitation. Pass this bill, sustain the agent, act upon his recommendations when they are sustained by facts and sound arguments, ingraft upon our system the tried improvements of other States, enlist the people, the whole people, in this great work of elevating the schools, and this little bill of three sections will be the beginning of a new era in our legislation on the subject of education."

These observations are worthy of record, as showing what was the condition of the schools of the State, as attested by one who was familiar with its interior portions, and who, being a genuine son of Rhode Island, would not be likely to judge her too harshly. They also show the views with which the school reform was undertaken, as well as the practical wisdom which characterized the plan that was proposed. To arouse any people to a sense of their own defects in matters of this kind is one of the most difficult of enterprises. Especially is it difficult to excite a population to abandon its earliest prejudices, and heartily to receive a system which it has been taught to suspect as dangerous or degrading. And yet, if the people could not be excited, it was hopeless to attempt a reform. For Rhode Island is, of all the States, intensely popular. Accustomed to convene its legislature in every part of its territory, and several times in a year, it regards its representatives as peculiarly the servants of the popular will. There were, however, certain important facilities for a successful movement. The State is small in its territory, and every part is accessible from Providence by a ride of two or three hours. It is likely to be animated by a common interest in any important object. Such an interest can be excited and diffused by a single impulse. Providence county embraces more than half the population of the State, a population intimately associated with it by a community of pursuit, of interest, and, to a very great extent, of personal acquaintance. Such a state is hardly liable to sectional jealousies and local prejudices. It is a state that moves together, if it move at all. The city of Providence, also, had already a school system, in the be-

ginning of complete success. Its school-houses, its apparatus, its teachers and methods of instruction, were already assuming the foremost rank ; and its system is at this moment worthy to be compared with those of Roxbury, Salem, Worcester, or Boston. There was thus, in the very midst of the State, open to the observation of all its population, an actual model of what its public schools ought to be made, to excite and urge them to imitation.

The bill was passed, and the agent was appointed. In the selection of the agent, the State was exceedingly fortunate ; Mr. Henry Barnard had for some years occupied a similar post in the State of Connecticut, from which he had been discharged, on the principle, we suppose, that “the whole need not a physician, but they who are sick” ; and as Connecticut deemed herself quite above any aid of this kind, she was very willing that the agent should go to Rhode Island. Mr. Barnard accordingly went, and in December, 1843, began to discharge the duties of his office as agent of the State. His first and most important duties were to ascertain, by personal examination and authentic report, the actual condition of the schools of the State, and to arouse the interest of the people themselves in a thorough and entire reformation. Both these duties involved the most laborious effort, and of a peculiarly trying character. To convince men of all classes of prejudices and opinions that their institutions of learning are greatly deficient implies, of course, that they themselves had been hitherto ignorant, and contented that their children should remain so ; and to argue with the ignorant concerning the advantages of education is always most discouraging. Especially is it discouraging, when the practical conclusion of all that you say is to lead them to raise money for an object of which they do not confess the value. Agitation of every kind was resorted to. Public meetings were held, not only in every town, but in every village and neighbourhood. More than eleven hundred meetings have been held in four years, expressly to discuss topics connected with public schools, at which more than fifteen hundred addresses have been delivered. Of these meetings, one hundred and fifty continued through the day and evening, more than one hundred through two evenings and a day, fifty through two days and three evenings, and twelve through an entire week. In addition, two hundred meetings of teachers

and parents have been held for discussions and lectures. Every part of the State has been visited and revisited, as no other State in the Union has ever been traversed for such a purpose. The press has lent its aid. More than sixteen thousand pamphlets and tracts on education have been distributed. For a single year, every almanac sold in the State carried with itself sixteen pages of matter relating to education.

After the state of the schools was ascertained, and the work of agitation was begun, a new school law was framed and presented to the General Assembly. It was first presented in May, 1844, to a committee of the House of Representatives, and was explained at great length as to the intent of each portion. After being reported to the House, it was printed, and its discussion postponed till June. At that time, its several provisions were explained before the two houses in convention, and all questions were answered, after which it was passed by the House almost unanimously. In the Senate, its consideration was delayed till the subject could be again referred to the people, the bill in the mean time being printed, with the explanations of its author, and circulated through the State. With a new legislature, the bill was taken up in the Senate in June, 1845, passed, and sent to the House, who concurred with the Senate, but postponed the operation of the law till the October session following. In connection with the beginning of this new system, a convention was called of all those most likely to be concerned or interested in its operation, at which its provisions were explained, and the various forms essential to their fulfilment were furnished.

The details of this wise caution and constant reference to the will of the people are curious, as illustrating the intensely popular spirit of the State. They are also most instructive, as showing how great reforms on points most delicate, and beset with the most serious difficulties, may be accomplished by a wise delay and considerate patience, if there be also an earnest and resolute spirit to urge them forward. The law was thus passed, and the school system which it established is wise, simple, and practical. It distributes twenty-five thousand dollars annually, on condition that each town raise by taxation a sum equal to that which is appropriated from the fund. In November, 1845, this new system be-

gan its operation. The agent by whom it had been projected and carried through was wisely retained as the commissioner for the State ; for a new system like this is far from being a machine that goes of itself. It was yet to prove itself worthy of the confidence of the people who had adopted it. The towns were to be persuaded to raise the annual tax, an act to which they had never been accustomed. New school-houses were to be erected. In many districts, there were no school-houses at all ; and in eleven towns, all the school-houses were owned by individuals, and rented to the districts. Most of the school-houses out of the larger towns were unworthy the name. New teachers were to be introduced, without violence to the prejudices of those to whom they were preferred. A thorough system of examination and supervision was for the first time to have both a nominal and real existence. The faith and zeal of the people were to be conducted through the difficulties and dangers attending upon the actual trial of a scheme to which they had been strangers. Here was a task severe enough for the energies of one man. The commissioner must of course be the impersonation of the system, and upon his faithfulness, his zeal, his command of the public confidence, and his ready tact to dispose of difficulties and to conciliate those opposed to him, the entire success of the enterprise would depend.

The experiment thus far, we are assured, has been most successful. Public confidence has been secured ; the two political parties, both those peculiar to the State and those common to the other States, are of one mind about school reform. No interference from religious jealousies could be feared in a community so essentially tolerant as this. In 1846, all the towns in the State, for the first time since the colony was planted, taxed themselves for school purposes. In three years, one hundred and twenty thousand dollars have been raised for school-houses out of the city of Providence, and the traveller is now delighted at the external neatness, the internal convenience, and in some instances the architectural beauty, of the school-houses that have everywhere sprung up. Private enterprise and liberality have in many cases done nobly. Teachers of a high order have been introduced, good wages are paid, and a vigilant supervision has been established. In 1847, the amount raised by tax in the State for schools was nearly double the amount appropriated from the treasury for the same purpose.

The commissioner still spends much of his time in visiting the various parts of the State, and can be consulted in his office at Providence by any one, after a ride of two or three hours. In addition to the supervision of the schools, he has done much for the interests of education in two separate departments, which he has employed as auxiliary to the great purposes of his mission. These are the formation of libraries, and the establishment and direction of courses of popular lectures. Libraries have been introduced into many of the districts for the use of the pupils in the schools, and larger collections of books have been made in many of the towns and villages for general circulation. In some instances, libraries of five hundred volumes, in others of seven hundred, in others of one thousand, have been purchased, and are now performing their silent but powerful ministry of good. To this work the commissioner has given his earnest personal attention, by keeping at his office, at all times, specimens of most of the books likely to be needed, where they can be examined by committees, and by stimulating individuals and communities to the noble enterprise of founding a library for themselves and their children. It may yet happen, that Rhode Island shall be the first State in the Union that can point to a well-selected library in every village and township. The plan for the maintenance of these libraries and for the circulation of the books, recommended and adopted by Mr. Barnard, is worthy the attention of every man who is interested in efforts of this kind.

Seventeen courses of popular lectures have been commenced and sustained in the State during the past winter, with interest and good results. In these efforts for the intellectual and moral improvement of the people of Rhode Island, the commissioner has had the earnest and zealous coöperation of most of the prominent men of the State. The citizens of Rhode Island are proverbially proud of their State; perhaps their jealousy lest it should be overlooked on account of its smallness makes them more sensitive to every thing that concerns its good name. Most of them are enterprising, from the necessities of their situation, and from the habits of their fathers. From the local situation of their large towns, as well as from the nature of their employments, they are necessarily brought into contact with men from the other sections of the Union, and have been conversant with their plans and

efforts. From the first, they have been more free in spirit, of a more sanguine and hopeful temperament, less saving, and more daring, than the other members of the New England sisterhood. When, therefore, they were rejoicing in their escape from their recent convulsion, and looking forward with that wise forecast which its fresh-remembered terrors might well inspire, it is not surprising that all the active spirits of the time, from the oldest to the youngest, should have deemed this enterprise an object worthy their attention, and should have entered upon the work with characteristic energy. The manufacturers might well tremble in the presence of the large masses of uninstructed population which were growing up around them, and see it written everywhere with a distinctness which none could comprehend so well as they, that it was only by educating this population that their business would prosper and their lives and property be secure. It deserves also to be noticed, as a subject for hearty congratulation, that in Rhode Island the trade of politics is very simple and very profitless. The State is so small, its salaries are so low, its places are so few, and the politicians are brought so frequently and so easily under the inspection of their constituents, that the jobbing and wire-pulling, and all the nameless and unnamable operations which interfere with attention to the higher interests of the people, are to a good degree discouraged and unknown. To this last circumstance more than to any other does the State owe it, that an enterprise so delicate and critical as the work of school reform was not seized upon by politicians, and sacrificed to their selfish purposes.

The organization through which the leading men of the State have acted in this movement is the Rhode Island Institute of Instruction. This association was organized in January, 1845, before the new school system was actually put into operation. It consists of the friends of education throughout the State; it publishes a journal, and has been, and still continues to be, an efficient society. It holds together the friends of common schools, reminds them of the duties to which they are pledged, keeps them acquainted with what is doing in every part of their little commonwealth, with every square mile of which each man of them is familiar, and thus cherishes and promotes a common feeling in the good cause.

There are few spectacles more worthy to excite an ardent

yet rational enthusiasm than the movement of a commonwealth, in a united purpose, and with resolute will, towards the accomplishment of any important end touching the moral or intellectual welfare of its citizens. When the value of the object is perceived by the mass of the people, and accepted by them as an interest for which they care and are ready to labor, our hopes for the progress of the race are confirmed and elevated. But when a people are seen to recognize a great deficiency in the means of education, and with one mind to take vigorous and rapid measures for its removal, they deserve indeed the highest praise. The efforts of the people of Rhode Island for their schools have been peculiar, in respect to the work which they had to accomplish, to the rapidity of the reform, to the unanimity and zeal with which it has been executed, to the permanent results which have been attained, and to the still higher promise for the future of which these results give the assurance.

We give Rhode Island a hearty welcome to the sisterhood of New England States, in this good work of school reform. All hail to her, as she puts her vigorous hand to this enterprise! Her energy, and her success already achieved, furnish the most cheering promise for the future. There is still one other New England State from which we hope in due time to hear, and that is the very respectable State that lies on the west of Rhode Island. There was a time when Connecticut boasted that she was the Common-school State, *par excellence*. Perhaps she now and then plumed herself not a little upon her superiority in this respect to benighted and uninstructed Rhode Island. Truly, it will be a dismal change, if the tables shall be turned in this respect, and the proportions of things shall be reversed. And yet we are not certain that such a change may not soon be realized. In Connecticut, as we learn, school reform is a scandal and an offence, and the very suggestion that it is called for is scouted as "not to be endured." A school superintendent is a useless appendage, which may do very well for Rhode Island, but is not needed in a State so enlightened. A large school fund, which pensions all the children upon the commonwealth, is the sufficient security for an unrivalled school system; while a school tax, imposed by the people on themselves, is a thing unknown and not to be thought of. It has been said, indeed, in Connecticut, that there are States which make such a tax the

condition to the reception of any allowance from the school funds which they have provided ; but it is not believed. It is even said that such a tax is voluntarily imposed, and sometimes to double and treble the amount which is required ; but this is regarded as altogether apocryphal, and almost as an imposition upon the credulity of a Connecticut tax-payer. Our hope for Connecticut is, we confess, in Rhode Island. When in Woonsocket and Chepachet successful schools shall have been established, and shall be more liberally supported even than at this moment, then let a Connecticut legislature be transported, bodily, by railroad to these towns, to see for themselves what has been accomplished, even in Rhode Island, and by the voluntary action of the people themselves ! If this *ultima ratio* will not convince and arouse them, we know not what method remains to be attempted.

ART. IX. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *History of the Greek Alphabet, with Remarks on Greek Orthography and Pronunciation.* By E. A. SOPHOCLES, A. M. Cambridge : George Nichols. 1848. 12mo. pp. 136.

In this little volume, Mr. Sophocles has embodied the results of a most acute, learned, and original investigation of the alphabet and the pronunciation of the Greek language. Many good scholars would probably consider these topics dry and uninteresting ; but in reality they are quite curious, and when well handled, rise into importance. The history of alphabetic writing is almost the history of human thought ; and the theory of its origin and the date of its introduction into Europe connect themselves with literary problems which have exercised the ingenuity of the most learned scholars. The question, whether the Homeric poems — the oldest monument of Greek literature — were at first committed to writing, or merely preserved by tradition and memory, until they were gathered up and arranged by the wits of a later age, depends, in a great measure, for its solution, upon the earlier or later period to which our researches assign this art. That there was a long period of time during which the Indo-Germanic races, in the chain of which the Hellenic tribes formed the most important link, were without the use of letters,